

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SECURE
THAT THE SPECIFIC NAME "OBTUSA" MONTAGU, 1803, AS
PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "BULLA OBTUSA", SHALL
BE THE OLDEST AVAILABLE NAME FOR THE SPECIES
CURRENTLY KNOWN BY THAT NAME (CLASS GASTROPODA,
ORDER TECTIBRANCHIATA)

By HENNING LEMCHE

(Universitetets Zoologiske Museum, Copenhagen)

(Commission Reference : Z.N.(S.) 379)

The purpose of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its Plenary Powers to secure that the specific name *obtusa* Montagu, 1803 (*Testacea brit.* : 223), as published in the combination *Bulla obtusa*, shall be the oldest available name for the species currently known by that name. The species concerned is a common European Tectibranch which has been known by the name *obtusa* Montagu over a hundred and fifty years. It would be very undesirable that this practice should be overthrown by the resurrection of some long-forgotten name of older date. In the present case the end desired will require the suppression by the Commission under its Plenary Powers of two older subjective synonyms. These names are (a) *alba* Kanmacher (F), 1798 (*in* Adams (G.), *Essays Microscope* (Ed. 2) : 639, pl. 14, fig. 27), as published in the combination *Voluta alba*; (b) *regulbiensis* Kanmacher, 1798 (*ibid* : 640, pl. 14, fig. 28), as published in the combination *Bulla regulbiensis*.

2. The uninterrupted use of the specific name *obtusa* Montagu was first challenged in 1915 (*Proc. malac. Soc. Lond.* 11 : 300—301), in a paper by Iredale, the relevant portion of which reads as follows :—

Montagu, when he introduced his *Bulla obtusa*, recorded as synonyms "*B. regulbiensis*, Turt. Lin. v. p. 351. Adams Micr. 14, fig. 28". Upon comparison I rejected this determination, the figure quoted seeming indeterminable. Montagu later, in the Suppl., 1808, p. 101, noted that Walker erroneously sent him *Bulla obtusa* under the name of *Voluta alba*. Referring to Walker I found a good figure there given, and can only conclude Montagu has confused the two names *regulbiensis* and *alba*. For, while the former, which Montagu recorded as his *obtusa*, is not that species, the latter, which Montagu denied, is undoubtedly this shell. I am not alone in this identification, as Forbes & Hanley, without doubt, quote Walker's figure 61 for Montagu's species. Walker's book, the correct quotation for which is Boys & Walker, *Test min. rar.*, 1784, is non-binominal¹, but in the second edition of the *Essays* on the

¹ An application in regard to this work has since been submitted by Dr. Lemche. This application was published on 28th June, 1957. (*Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 13 : 228-229).

Bull. zool. Nomencl. Vol. 12, Part 12. August 1957.

Microscope by G. Adams, Kanmacher added a chapter on minute shells, and stated that the correct names had been given him by Jacobs. A plate is given, and the figures are copies of those provided by Boys & Walker. There, on pl. XIV, fig. 27, appears a copy of their fig. 61, and in the text, p. 639, it is named *Voluta alba*. This is followed by *Bulla regulbiensis*, so even if it were concluded that these were the same, the former has priority.

The correct name for the type of *Retusa*, then, is *Voluta alba* Kanmacher, Essays Microsc. (G. Adams) 2nd edit. p. 639 p. xiv, fig. 27, 1798 (*ex* Jacobs MS.).

3. I am in general agreement with the analysis of the facts as set out in the passage from Iredale's paper quoted in the preceding paragraph but I disagree completely with his conclusion that because of those facts the well-known name *obtusa* Montagu should be discarded in synonymy in favour of the unknown and confusing name *alba* Kanmacher. There are exceedingly strong grounds on the basis of usage against the adoption of such a course. Before discussing these, however, it will be well to take note of two special considerations peculiar to the present case which, quite apart from the question of usage, would lay the adoption of the name *alba* Kanmacher open to the strongest objection. These are explained in the immediately following paragraphs.

4. The problems involved in the interpretation of the nominal species *Voluta alba* Kanmacher, 1798, and *Voluta regulbiensis* Kanmacher, 1798, are extremely difficult and, while, as explained above, I believe that Iredale's treatment of these nominal species is correct, the difficulties involved are such that there must always be some doubt as to the correctness of the arguments on which these identifications are based. The adoption of either of these names for so well-known and so common a species as *obtusa* Montagu would therefore be especially objectionable, as it could not be expected to secure a stable and generally accepted name for that species.

5. The adoption of the name *alba* Kanmacher in place of *obtusa* Montagu would give rise to most serious confusion by reason of the fact that there is a common and well-known species bearing the same name which occurs in the same area and which belongs to a genus (*Cylichna* Lovén, 1846, *Ofvers. K. Vetens. Akad. Forhandl.*, Stockholm 3 (No. 5) : 142) the members of which cannot be separated by their shells from the species belonging to the genus (*Retusa* Brown) of which *obtusa* Montagu is the type species (paragraph 8 below). It is not necessary to stress the intolerable confusion which would be inevitable if in each of these superficially inseparable genera there was a species bearing the name *alba* as its valid specific name. The species of *Cylichna* here in question is *Cylichna alba* (Brown (Captain T.), 1827) (= *Volvaria alba* Brown (Captain T.), 1827, *Ill. rec. Conch. Gt. Brit. Ireland* : pl. 38). As already noted, this is a well-known species and as the name *alba* Brown is the oldest available specific name for it, that name should now be placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*.

6. It is necessary now to consider the question of the relative usage in the literature of the specific names *obtusa* Montagu and *alba* Kanmacher respectively. Full particulars under this head are given in a paper by myself entitled "Northern and Arctic Tectibranch Gastropods I. The Larval Shell; II A Revision of the Cephalospid Species" published in 1948 (*K. dansk vidensk. Selsk., Biol. Skr.* 5 (No. 3) : 84—85). It will be seen from the particulars there given that of the 96 papers listed the name *obtusa* was used in 89 and the name *alba* in only seven. Further in the forty years which have elapsed since the publication of Iredale's paper only four authors have followed him in rejecting the name *obtusa* Montagu in favour of *alba* Kanmacher. The name *regulbiensis* Kanmacher has not been used in place of *obtusa* Montagu by any author, either before or since the publication of Iredale's paper, having indeed made only two appearances in the whole literature (1827 and 1848 respectively) on each of these occasions having been used in a sense different from that of Kanmacher. On the ground of usage the case for preserving the name *obtusa* Montagu is therefore overwhelming. I accordingly recommend that this end be secured by the suppression by the Commission under its Plenary Powers of the specific names *alba* Kanmacher, 1798, as published in the combination *Voluta alba* and *regulbiensis* Kanmacher, 1798, as published in the combination *Bulla regulbiensis*.

7. Having now examined the problems involved at the specific-name level in the present case it is necessary to turn to the problems requiring attention at the generic-name and family-group name-levels.

8. The oldest available name for the genus containing the nominal species *Bulla obtusa* Montagu is *Retusa* Brown (Captain T.), 1827, *Ill. rec. Conch. Gt. Brit. Ireland* : pl. 38). Three nominal species were then placed in this genus by Brown, namely two new nominal species (*Retusa plicata* and *Retusa discors*) and *Bulla obtusa* Montagu. The two nominal species introduced by Brown when establishing his genus *Retusa* are evidently either the fry of, or individual variations of, *Bulla obtusa* Montagu and this view has been accepted by all authors subsequent to Brown who have examined this question. From the taxonomic point of view the genus *Retusa* Brown has thus been effectively monotypical from the time of its original establishment. The first author formally to select one of the originally included species to be the type species of *Retusa* Brown was Iredale who in 1915 (*Proc. malac. Soc. Lond.* 11 : 300) so selected *Bulla obtusa* Montagu. (It may be noted at this point that in 1893 (in Tryon, *Man. Conch.* 15 : 294) Pilsbry selected *Bulla truncatella* Bruguière, [1792] (*Ency. méth.*, Vers 1(2) : 377) to be the type species of *Retusa* Brown but that, as this was not one of the nominal species originally included in that genus, that selection is invalid.) In [1844] (*Ill. rec. Conch. Gt. Brit. Ireland* (ed. 2) : 58, pl. XIX) Brown rejected both his name *Retusa* and his name *Diaphana*, referring the species which he had originally placed in those genera to a new nominal genus to which he gave the name *Utriculus*. This name was later used by a few authors in place of *Retusa* but it does not appear that anyone

has ever formally selected a type species for this genus. This is no doubt because of the fact that it was early realised that *Utriculus* Brown, [1844], was invalid as being a junior homonym of *Utriculus* Schumacher, 1817 (*Essai Vers test.* : 62, 203). In order, however, to assign a definite place in the literature to the name *Utriculus* Brown, I now select *Bulla obtusa* Montagu, 1803, from among the originally included nominal species to be the type species of *Utriculus* Brown, thereby making that generic name a junior objective synonym of *Retusa* Brown, 1827.

9. In view of the close superficial similarity between species of the genus *Retusa* Brown and those of the genus *Cylichna* Lovén (paragraph 5 above) it is desirable that the present opportunity should be taken to place the latter name as well as the name *Retusa* Brown on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology*. The type species of *Cylichna* Lovén is *Bulla cylindracea* Pennant, 1777 (*Brit. Zool.* (ed. 4) 4 : 100, 117) by selection by Winckworth (R), 1932 (*J. Conch.* 19 : 232). The specific name of the type species of this genus is the oldest available name for the species concerned and should therefore now be placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology*.

10. The genus *Retusa* Brown is the type species of the currently accepted family RETUSIDAE. This family-group name, which was originally published in the correct form by Thiele in 1931 (*Handb. syst. Weichtier-k* 1 : 189), should now be placed on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology*.

11. For the reasons set out in the present application, I now ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature :—

(1) to use its Plenary Powers to suppress the under-mentioned specific names for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy :—

(a) *alba* Kanmacher, 1798, as published in the combination *Voluta alba* ;

(b) *regulbiensis* Kanmacher, 1798, as published in the combination *Bulla regulbiensis* ;

(2) to place the under-mentioned generic names on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* :—

(a) *Retusa* Brown (Captain T.), 1827 (gender : feminine) (type species, by selection by Iredale (1915) : *Bulla obtusa* Montagu, 1803) ;

(b) *Cylichna* Lovén, 1846 (gender : feminine) (type species, by selection by Winckworth (R.) (1932) : *Bulla cylindracea* Pennant, 1777) ;

- (3) to place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—
- (a) *obtusa* Montagu, 1803, as published in the combination *Bulla obtusa* (specific name of type species of *Retusa* Brown (Captain T.), 1827) ;
 - (b) *cylindracea* Pennant, 1787, as published in the combination *Bulla cylindracea* (specific name of type species of *Cylichna* Lovén, 1846) ;
 - (c) *alba* Brown (Captain T.), 1827, as published in the combination *Volvaria alba* ;
- (4) to place the under-mentioned generic name on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* : *Utriculus* Brown (Captain T.), [1844] (a junior homonym of *Utriculus* Schumacher, 1817, and a junior objective synonym of *Retusa* Brown (Captain T.), 1827) ;
- (5) to place on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* the two specific names specified in (1) above as there proposed to be suppressed under the Plenary Powers ;
- (6) to place the under-mentioned family-group name on the *Official List of Family-Group Names in Zoology* : RETUSIDAE Thiele, 1931 (type genus : *Retusa* Brown (Captain T.), 1827).